

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in March 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who appear in the 1901 census for St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex and Farmfield Reformatory for Inebriate Women, Horley, Surrey.

The Life of ALICE CLANCY (née KILKENNY)

Alice was born around 1860 to Owen and Judith KILKENNY (née O'DONNELL) of Kilclogher, Co Leitrim. She was baptised at Aughavas, Co Leitrim on 20 July 1860¹. She had younger siblings Honor, Rose, Thomas, John, Mary and Owen.²

On 8 November 1877 she married Cornelius CLANCY, aged 22, of Glenboy, a labourer at Glenfarne R.C. Church. Her occupation was given as dressmaker. Witnesses were Owen and Thomas Clancy.³

¹ Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers 1655 -1915; Frye family tree www.ancestry.co.uk

² Frye family tree www.ancestry.co.uk

³ Ireland Catholic Parish Registers 1655 -1915; Frye family tree www.ancestry.co.uk

By 1881 the couple had moved to London and were to be found at 377 Kentish Town Road, in the district of St Pancras.⁴ By this time, they had two daughters, Edith Alice aged 2 and Elizabeth Rachel aged 5 months, both born in St Pancras, London. Cornelius is shown as a police constable.

By 1891 the couple were at 1 Willow Place, Kentish Town and had added three more children to the family – Mary Alice, Francis Cornelius and Hugh Russell, aged 5,3 and 1 respectively. Cornelius is now shown as an omnibus conductor.⁵

By 1893 they are at 116 Junction Road, Camden and Mary, Francis and Hugh are attending Burghley Road school.⁶

All seems to be going smoothly but then on 23 August 1895 Alice, aged 34, is admitted to St John's Road Workhouse Infirmary. She stays until 31 Aug then is readmitted on 23 Sept and stays into November.⁷ She is to become a regular at various workhouses over the next 20 years. What brought this about is unknown, but it seems that the family became broken up and Cornelius either left the family home or the situation became untenable due to Alice's drinking habits.

On 21 February 1896 she is admitted to Islington Workhouse and remains till 6 March.⁸

⁴ 1881 census Reg district St Pancras, sub district Kentish Town, RG11 Piece 220 Folio 20 Page 33 www.findmypast.co.uk

⁵ 1891 census Reg district St Pancras, sub district Kentish Town, RG12 Piece 137 Folio 186 Page 9 www.ancestry.co.uk

⁶ London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840-1911; www.ancestry.co.uk

⁷ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

⁸ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

She is readmitted later in March till April, then again 17 October till 7 November, then 8 November till 10 Nov.⁹

In 1898 she is there again from 24 February to 13 April, then again from 10 to 23 November.¹⁰

In 1900 she attends Islington Workhouse from 11-16 February when she is given over to the police. She is then discharged from St George's Workhouse and handed over once more to the police.¹¹

It is then in the 1901 census that we find her at St Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory. How long she stays we do not know.¹²

On 5 September 1903 she is convicted and appears in the Police Gazette. She gives her address as Campbell Road, Holloway. Aged 43, she is described as 5ft 4 ¼ in., of medium build, fresh complexion, dark brown (turning grey) hair, blue eyes, straight nose, oval face and with scars on her forehead, right side of her nose and left side of her mouth. Her occupation is shown as charwoman. It is noted in the remarks that she frequents Seven Sisters Road, Holloway. She also seems to have acquired an alias as she is also shown as 'Daisy Bell'. In the photograph she is wearing a straw hat, high-necked blouse and jacket. Her mouth is twisted to one side, possibly because of the above-mentioned scar. She is sentenced to one month hard labour. ¹³

⁹ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁰ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

¹¹ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

¹² 1901 census RG13 Piece 1171 Folio 13 Page 17; www.ancestry.co.uk

¹³ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

On 7 September that year she makes her first newspaper appearance in the Islington Gazette.¹⁴

ANOTHER BLACKLISTER

Alice Clancy, 43, who has been many times in metropolitan police-courts on charges of drunkenness in the streets, was on Friday, at North London Police-court, again on the old charge, when she pleaded for another chance as the police were always after her.

Mr d'Eyncourt – Is she on the list?

The gaoler – No, sir. But she has been convicted at this Court three times this year – in February, May and June – for drunkenness, and on the last occasion was sent to gaol for a month.

Mr d'Eyncourt (to the prisoner) – Will you be dealt with by me, or go to the Sessions for trial?

The prisoner – By you, sir. But don't be too hard upon me.

Mr d'Eyncourt – You will go to prison for a month, and be put upon the Black list.

By 1904 she is back at St Pancras Workhouse where she is discharged on 26 April. In 1905 she attends Islington Workhouse from 10 – 19 December. In 1906 she is admitted to Islington on 26 April.¹⁵

She is back in the newspapers for a second time on 19 July of 1906.

ANOTHER CANDIDATE FOR THE WORKHOUSE

Alice Clancy, 44, dressmaker, with no fixed abode, who has been remanded at her own request to be sent to a Home, appeared not to be wanted in any Home because of her previous record.

¹⁴ The British Newspaper Archive; www.findmypast.co.uk; Islington Gazette 07 September 1903

¹⁵ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

*Mr Bros discharged her, and advised her to go to the workhouse, which she said she would do.*¹⁶

On 19 November 1906 she is yet again in the newspaper, when she is charged with being drunk and disorderly.¹⁷

AN OVER-FULL WORKHOUSE

At North London Police Court Alice Clancy, a tall, strong-looking woman, described as a dressmaker, with no fixed abode, was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Seven Sisters-road.

The prisoner, with half a dozen other women, was sent to the Strand Union Workhouse at Edmonton because the Islington Workhouse was full. But on the way she got drunk, and said it was impossible for her to walk about Islington without getting into trouble. She was no sooner out of gaol than she was in again, and the only safe place was the workhouse.

Mr Fordham asked as to the prisoner's past, and Assistant-Gaoler Clover said this was her thirty-first appearance at this court.

The Prisoner: And my husband was a policeman!

Mr Fordham: Go to prison for a month.

The Prisoner: Shall I be out for Christmas? If I am I will get drunk, and you will see me again.

She certainly appears to have a sense of humour but it is sad to see that she is unable to go any length of time without getting drunk again.

¹⁶ The British Newspaper Archive; www.findmypast.co.uk; Islington Gazette 19 July 1906

¹⁷ The British Newspaper Archive; www.findmypast.co.uk; Islington Gazette 19 November 1906

In January 1909 she is once more at St Johns and St Pancras workhouses, then is sent from there on 14 January to Tooting Bec Asylum.¹⁸

By the census on 5 April 1911, she is staying in a women's boarding house at 102-104-106 Georges Rd, Holloway Rd, Islington with about 25 other women.¹⁹

She continues to be in and out of Islington Workhouse that year, at times discharged at her own request. But on 14 November 1911 she appears once more in the Police Gazette. She is described similarly to her previous entry but in her photograph, she now sports a hat with dark flowers or feathers atop it. Her chin is a little more drooped but otherwise she has worn reasonably well over the last 8 years. She gives the address of 102 St George's Road (see above). She is convicted at Clerkenwell court and sent to an inebriate reformatory for 3 years.²⁰

In December 1914 we find her last recorded workhouse record in St Pancras Workhouse Register. She is listed as a hawker, is in ward 3 and gives her nearest relative as her son Hugh, a soldier, and her last address as 20 Kings Road.²¹ In all, 31 records exist online of her workhouse admissions and discharges.

In the meantime, her husband Cornelius appears to have set up home with Nellie/Ellen at Ladbrooke Grove as listed in the 1901 census and is now working as a bus driver. Nellie is shown as his wife, but no record could be found of a marriage (which would have been bigamous). They have one

¹⁸ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁹ 1911 census RG10 Piece 862; www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁰ UK, Registers of Habitual Criminals and Police Gazettes, 1834-1934; www.ancestry.co.uk

²¹ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921; www.ancestry.co.uk

daughter, Norah, but have the two youngest of Alice's children, Francis and Hugh, staying with them.²²

Cornelius died aged 55 on 3 March 1910 in the Trafalgar Public House, address given as 23 Basing Road, Westbourne Park; cause of death heart disease.²³

The last we can find of Alice is a record of her death on 25 January in 1929 in Islington, aged 69 years old at 77a Highgate Hill (i.e. Islington Workhouse). Her address is given as 88 Grove Road, Islington and she is shown as widow of Cornelius Clancy, omnibus driver. Her death was registered by her daughter Elizabeth Price on 28 January 1929.²⁴ This is corroborated by the death index.

25

It is perhaps remarkable that she attained the age of 69 years, given her lifestyle and the poverty at that time.

© Leona J Thomas March 2023

²² 1901 census RG13 Piece 27 Folio 13 Page 19; www.ancestry.co.uk

²³ Angela Alcock family tree www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁴ Angela Alcock family tree www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁵ England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007; Jan-Feb-Mar 1929; Islington, Vol 1b, page 325